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Rural Urbanism -- the Village of Cambérène
[Urbanisme Rural -- le village du Cambérène]

by G.J. Duchemin

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The Village of Cambérène (Dakar)

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175 The village of Cambérène was founded about 1885 by the gathering of tabilés [disciples] around their teacher, Li Mamou Laye Thiaw, who had set up his dwelling near the watercourse Der Gui N'Dargou to the northeast of Yoff (east of the present gardens of the Government).

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622 Li Mamou died in 1909, and his brother, Seydina Issa Laye Thiaw, succeeded him at the head of the small zaouïa, which in 1914 was the victim of an epidemic of the plague.

Seydina Issa decided, as is generally done in such cases, to change the location of the little village.

361 Considering his first location unfavorable, being too near the Niaye, he decided to establish it in the open air in front of the heights of the string of littoral dunes on the very edge of the sea, which should, he thought, be healthier.

[369] Having ascertained that in Dakar an effort was made to align the houses and to put straight and wide streets between them, he resolved to order that, in establishing the new village, the center of the site was to be the mosque, which, first constructed [346] of wood and straw, was replaced in 1939 by a handsome edifice of masonry.

To the north and south of the mosque, Seydina Issa laid out two parallel avenues east to west. He placed the dwellings of his family facing the entrance of the mosque, leaving open a large space which he had reserved to the east; at right angles to the principal streets, some north-south streets were laid out, and each family put its dwellings in the form of a U opening on the principal streets.

[18] [Fig. 1. appears here.]

The arrangement was subsequently respected, and the most recent of the 28 land-grants open on a third east-west avenue.

The curious fact of this very precise outline is not noted when one arrives at Cambérène by the road, nor when one goes about on foot within the village, and even the diagram on the map on a scale of 1/50,000 does not make it stand out. Thus, it was a

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Fig. 1. Aerial view of the village of Cambérène.

surprise when the accompanying aerial photograph, taken at random during a flight at low altitude, revealed the prescribed arrangement of this village.

369 This attempt at urbanism merits notice as proof that evolution in Senegal can be circumspect and effectual and can adapt modern conceptions to local conditions.

G. J. Duchemin
(Dakar)